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DISCOURSE

UPON

THE NATURE OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

By JOHN BUDDO, A. M.

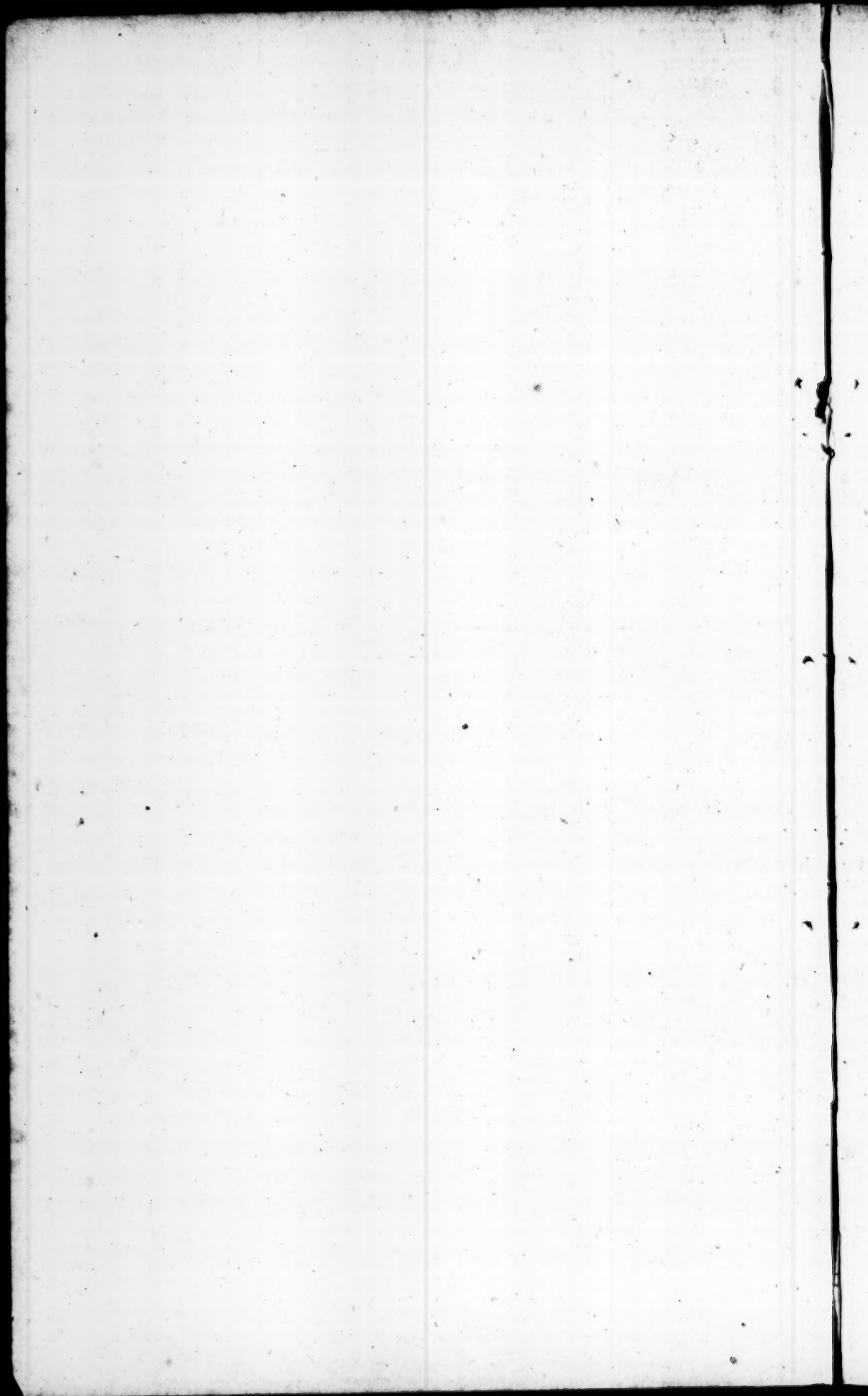
Mitte leves spes, et certamina divitiarum. Hor. Epif. 5. Lib. i.

I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. Rom. i. 16.

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DISCOURSE, &c.

PHILIPPIANS iii. 10.

That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.

THE Apostle Paul, in the context, warns the Philippians, to guard against the influence of such deceivers, as endeavoured to disturb the peace of the church, by a furious zeal for Jewish observances. In opposition to all such reliances, he exhorts them to place the whole of their dependence, upon the grace of God revealed in the gospel of Christ. He assures them, that he himself had done so ; though he had more cause to boast with regard to Jewish privileges, than most of them who valued themselves so highly upon such advantages. *If any other man thinketh, says the Apostle, that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more : circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews ; as touching the law, a Pharisee ; concerning zeal, persecuting the church ; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.* Then follows the

the eighth verse, to the first clause of which we are to trace the connection of the tenth verse. The syntax in the original language, leads us back to it for the connection. And to place the connection there, we apprehend, is perfectly agreeable to the Apostle's meaning. *Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.* The tenth verse follows by a natural connection: for the excellency of this knowledge is, *that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.* The intermediate phrases therefore are inserted by way of parenthesis; and since the insertion is short, do not greatly embarrass the meaning. For the Apostle, in the parenthesis, mentions, that he had *suffered the loss of all other things*, and held them worthless, *that he might win Christ, and be found in him, not having his own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith**. Having added such expressions, as might seem to imply, that he had dropped the idea expressed in the first clause of the eighth verse, he resumes the illustration of the same idea in the tenth verse. He enumerates there by gradation or climax, the several particulars of that *knowledge, for the excellency of which he esteems all other things but loss*†; and so exhibits a complete portrait of the great object

* Second part of 8th, and throughout 9th verse.

† First clause of 8th verse.

ject of his choice ; *That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.*

In explaining and opening up the different particulars suggested from the words of the text, we are led to take under our view the nature of Christianity, and to state its moral or practical tendency.

The text contains three several sources of gain, in comparison of which the true Christian esteems all other reliances, privileges, and attainments, *but loss.*

I. The *first* and most general source of gain, which the true Christian prefers to any worldly advantage whatever, is, *that he may know Christ.*

II. The *second* source of such gain, is, that he may know *the power of Christ's resurrection.*

III. The *third* and *last* source, is, that he may know *the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.*

I. The *first* and most general source of gain, which the true Christian prefers to any worldly advantage whatever, is, *that he may know Christ. Yea doubtless, says the Apostle, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, that I may know him.*

To know, has different significations in Scripture. It denotes sometimes bare speculative knowledge.

knowledge. In this sense, a sense of the same verb is employed by the Evangelist Luke. *That servant*, Jesus is recorded by him to have said, *who knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.* For the most part, however, it is to be taken with greater latitude. In the text, the phrase, *that I may know him*, has a peculiar force or emphasis. It expresses not a speculative knowledge of Christ, but that knowledge of him which his true votaries really feel and experience. This knowledge implies the experience or consciousness of that influence, which *the word of our Lord's kingdom* produces upon *a good and honest heart*, enlightened and purified by God's Spirit, for bringing forth the fruits of wisdom and righteousness. It includes the experience or consciousness of that influence, which the objects exhibited to our view in the Christian scheme, have through the application of divine grace upon our minds, hearts and lives. It involves an intimate consideration, feeling, and experience of that *salvation*, whereof *Christ became the Author unto all them that obey him.*

And doubtless, the gospel is the best gift, that could be granted to men by their Creator. It makes a clear discovery of *the grace of God in Christ Jesus*; and illustrates God's goodness towards us, and our duty towards God. It assures Christians of mercy to forgive them upon their amendment, and of eternal happiness upon their perseverance in sincere,

sincere, though imperfect obedience ; and contains a complete system of instructions for enlightening their understandings in the whole circle of duty, and a promise of divine assistance in every time of need. And whenever any part of this doctrine is set aside, the important truths of our holy religion are not fully exhibited to view. We shall, therefore, attempt to unfold the gospel-scheme, by stating and illustrating the truth of these four propositions.

1. Christ is a person of infinite perfection and dignity, the Messiah foretold by the Prophets, and was manifested in *the fulness of time*.

2. Christ appeared upon earth as our Teacher, our Legislator, and Pattern.

3. Christ *offered up himself* a voluntary sacrifice for the expiation of sin, satisfied divine justice upon our account, *ever liveth to make intercession* for us, and will complete his mediatorial office, by returning to *judge the world in righteousness*.

4. Faith and repentance are announced in the gospel, to be absolutely requisite for promoting the progressive improvement of Christians, and accomplishing the end of our holy religion.

1. Christ is a person of infinite perfection and dignity, the Messiah foretold by the Prophets, and was manifested in *the fulness of time*.

As to the infinite perfection and dignity of Christ, Scripture informs us, that *in the beginning*

*ginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him ; and without him was not any thing made that was made**. Scripture again assures us, that by his own Son God made the worlds. By him were all things created that are in heaven and in earth, visible, and invisible : all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and by him all things consist. By him the day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace †. Without multiplying passages from Scripture, to confirm a truth so plain, as that Christ is a person of infinite perfection and dignity ; we proceed to take under our consideration the second part of the proposition, and to shew, that he is the Messiah foretold by the Prophets.

Immediately after the fall, God Almighty promised, that the *seed of the woman* should *bruise the head of the serpent*. He sent his Prophets in succession one after another, to keep up the expectation of a wonderful Person, who was to deliver mankind from the abyss of vice and misery, and to restore them unto a state of virtue and happiness. *A Star was to come out of Jacob, and a Branch to spring from the stem of Jesse ; and unto him was to be the gathering of the people ‡*. According to the
magnificent

* John i. 1, 2, 3.

† Heb. i. 2. ; Col. i. 16, 17. ; Luke i. 78, 79.

‡ Numb. xxiv. 17. ; Isa. xi. 1. ; Gen. xlix. 10.

magnificent and seemingly contradictory style of prophecy, *he was to be a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, yet the Gentiles were to come to his light, and kings to the brightness of his rising* *.

The Prophets, to prevent their predictions from sinking into contempt and oblivion, were led by the Spirit of inspiration, to foretel the coming of the Messiah's kingdom, with such expressions, as understood in a literal sense, denoted that it would be of this world. Rapt into future times, they described him as ruling *in the midst of his enemies, judging among the nations, and higher than the kings of the earth* †. Their predictions, however, as mankind, even in the days of the Prophets, might have collected from their reference to circumstances, were to be taken in a figurative meaning. The Jews therefore had not reason to conclude from ancient prophecy, that the Messiah was to appear a great temporal Prince, to rescue them from the Roman yoke, and to *restore again the kingdom to Israel*. All the descriptions given of him in the writings of the Prophets, were relative to the constitution of that spiritual kingdom, which he was to establish in the world. He was to *judge with righteousness*, he was to *preach good tidings* to the meek, and *proclaim liberty to the captive*; he was to *comfort all that mourn, and to heal the broken hearted*. He was to open *the eyes of the blind, and*

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* Isa. liii. 3.; Isa. lx. 3.

† Psal. cx. 2.; Isa. ii. 4.; Psal. lxxxix. 27.

the ears of the deaf; he was to make the dumb to praise God, and the lame to leap like an hart *. Notwithstanding his real greatness, he was to be *despised and rejected* by the far greater part of the Jewish nation, and to be *led as a lamb to the slaughter*. But though he was to *taste of death*, and to make *his grave with the rich*; yet he was to rise again before he had seen *corruption*. He was to subdue *his enemies*, and *prolong his days*; to *see his seed*, and the *travail of his soul*; and to establish a new and *everlasting kingdom* †. Accordingly, all these predictions were exactly accomplished in Christ Jesus. *When the proper fulness of time was come*, and in a manner suitable to infinite wisdom, *God sent forth his Son made of a woman*. Jesus was conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, and born of a virgin at *Bethlehem of Judea*, in the reign of *Augustus Cæsar*. Though he was *in the form of God*, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, yet he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was found in the fashion of a man. He took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham ‡. Though his real greatness was transcendent and infinite, yet his visible appearance was clouded with every external circumstance of disgrace and obscurity. He whom David in the spirit of prophecy called his *Lord*, was brought

* Psal. lxxii. 2.; Isa. lxi. 1, 2. xxxv. 5, 6. † Isa. liii. 3, 7, 9.; Psal. xvi. 10. lxxii. 9.; Isa. liii. 10, 11.; Dan. vii. 27.

‡ Gal. iv. 4.; Matth. i. 18. to the end; Luke i. 31. 35. ii. 1. 4, 5, 6, 7.; Phil. ii. 6, 7, 8.; Heb. ii. 16.

brought forth in a stable, and *laid in a manger*. Soon were *his mother*, and supposed father, expelled their native country, and driven into exile with the heavenly Babe, by the unrelenting resentment of a cruel tyrant *. After he reached the years of manhood, his kindred and disciples were frequently seduced, through the influence of blind prejudice ; whilst his enemies displayed their wanton and obstinate malice, in unparalleled acts of cruelty. The excellence of his doctrines, the perfection of his precepts, the purity of his example, and the judicious severity of his poignant reproofs, induced *the chief priests and elders*, to *set themselves, and take counsel against* him. Deviating from every principle of justice and propriety, they misrepresented, derided, menaced, and persecuted him, for his well directed endeavours to convince and reform them. But let us remember this *Prophet like unto Moses, mighty in word and deed before God and all the people*, whilst he underwent his last sufferings. Then was he betrayed through the diabolical treachery of one disciple, denied with oaths and imprecations through the unmanly, yet pitiable cowardice of another, and at length basely neglected and forsaken by them all. His enemies did reward him *evil for good*. *They sought false witnesses to put him to death ; but found none : yea, though many false witnesses came, yet their witness agreed not together. The high priest also questioned Jesus concerning his disciples and doctrine,*

* Luke ii. 7. ; Matth. ii. 13.

doctrine, not with a view to procure information of the truth, but from a design to entangle him. And a Jewish officer ruffian-like, *struck him with the palm of the hand*, in the presence of the high priest and the council, because his answer was not calculated to gratify their malicious purposes. After a most unjust condemnation, accompanied with great variety of shameful insults, the Jewish rulers, eager to obtain the execution of their sentence, accused him before Pilate as a blasphemer against their own law. But the Jews, who valued independence so much, were now subject to the authority of a Roman governor; and failing in their charge of blasphemy, impeached him anew, as a rebel against the suspicious emperor Tiberius Cæsar. By this last accusation they intimidated Pilate, and compelled him to give sanction to their sentence, for his own safety; though fully convinced of his innocence, he declared, that he *found no fault in him*. But, above all, let us recollect the concluding part of this tragical scene, and think that he hung upon the cross between two infamous malefactors, and expired in bitter agonies, amidst the cruel scorn of hard-hearted spectators, *shaking their heads, and saying, If thou be the Son of God, save thyself, and come down from the cross* *. Well may we apply the words of Moses, to express our astonishment at this wonderful event; *Ask now of the days that are past, which were before thee, since the*

* Matth. xxvii. 40. 42.; Mark xv. 30.

*the day that God created man upon the earth, and ask from the one side of heaven unto the other, whether there has been any such thing as this great thing is, or hath been heard like it * ?* Jesus having suffered the cruel and ignominious death of the cross, *was buried*, and continued under the power of death for a time. But *on the third day, he rose again* from the dead. He conversed with his disciples, for the space of *forty days* after his resurrection; and then ascended into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come *to judge the quick and the dead*. Ought not Christ then to have suffered these things, before he entered *into his glory*? Thus it is written in Moses and the Prophets; and according to their predictions, *it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day*. The foregoing proofs and illustrations are sufficient to shew the completion of such prophecies in Scripture, as are relative to the coming of the Messiah, or that Christ is the Messiah foretold by the Prophets. But the third part of the proposition deserves likewise to be illustrated and confirmed; That Christ was manifested in *the fulness of time*.

Daughters of Jerusalem, said Jesus to the women that followed him to his last sufferings, *weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and your children; for behold the days are coming, when you shall say, blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps that never*
gave

* Deut. iv. 32.

gave suck; for if these things are done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry? Jerusalem was to be destroyed, and the Jews were to be scattered throughout all lands, in consequence of rejecting Jesus as the Messiah. This order of events was conformable to the ancient prediction of Jacob. *The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, till Shiloh come.* Again, Daniel's famous prediction determines the time *from the going forth of the commandment to restore and rebuild Jerusalem after the captivity, unto the commencement of the Messiah's kingdom, to be seventy weeks of years, which amount to four hundred and ninety years**. Afterward, and exactly at the period fixed by the prediction, the history of our Saviour shews, that he appeared in the world, *to finish transgression, to make an end of sin, and to bring in an everlasting righteousness*. Besides, it was foretold by the Prophets, that *the Messenger of the Covenant, the Desire of all nations* was to come, before the second temple should be destroyed†. All these predictions were verified by the event. It is then clear, that Christ was manifested in *the fulness of time*, or precisely at the time foretold by the Prophets. And these prophecies were so well known, at the beginning of the Christian æra, that the Jews, and all the oriental nations of the Roman empire were then filled with the expectation of a wonderful person, who was to be the Governor and Saviour

* Dan. ix. 24, &c.

† Mal. iii. 1.; Hag. ii. 7.

our of mankind. From all the preceding proofs and illustrations put together, it will appear, that Christ is a person of infinite perfection and dignity, the Messiah foretold by the Prophets, and was manifested in *the fulness of time*.

2. Again, in the *second* place, Christ appeared upon earth as our Teacher, our Legislator, and Pattern. At that period, when the Gospel was first published in the world, mankind were sunk into the grossest corruption, both as to religion and morals. Idolatry had overspread the whole earth, except the narrow compass of Judea. Some few philosophers indeed rejected the belief of deities, many in number, whose wrath their votaries endeavoured to appease, by cruel, obscene, and ridiculous ceremonies. They perceived and acknowledged the existence of a supreme Being, who established and continues to direct the course of nature. But still the most civilized people, though they made great improvements in philosophy and the sciences, were strangers to the just knowledge and service of God. Their orators, poets, sculptors, and painters, did indeed propagate the marvellous in ancient fiction. They embellished the feats of arms, made the invention of arts to operate on the wonder of posterity, and prompted mankind more and more to substitute sensible objects of religious worship, instead of a Being entirely spiritual. Their philosophers too, had many curious speculations, many different theories. They
sometimes

sometimes gave great scope to the fallies of fancy; and ascribed life to stars, fountains, and rivers, in accounting for appearances which they did not comprehend. Others, it must be allowed, had more rational and sublime ideas of nature, and of its first cause, and carried their investigation of religious truths, as far as the light of natural reason alone could penetrate. But, however far wise men might go in their researches to detect the errors of others, yet they did little to discover and unfold the important truths of religion, or to reform their own practice. From the things that are made, they deduced indeed the existence and principal attributes of God. But the different relations which his existence and attributes bear to man in particular, and the practical use to be made of them, they understood imperfectly. Strangers to the exercise of a rational and manly piety, they could not devise any mode of worship suitable to the purity and excellence of the supreme Being. On the contrary, though they pretended to despise the deities of the vulgar, yet they addressed them as the only objects of religious worship. They occasionally celebrated the intrinsic beauty and excellence of virtue with many elegant encomiums; but they founded it not on the authority of heaven, nor joined it always with progress in a holy life, as its end or object. And even when they expressed their belief of a future state, the transmigration of souls, and the shady realms of Pluto, fell far

far short of that sublime and rational happiness, which the Gospel-revelation promises to all true Christians, in a future and eternal state.

Consider, on the other hand, that the Jews preferred ritual observances to *the weightier matters of the law, mercy, judgment, and faith*. They were highly censurable for their pride, hypocrisy, and selfishness, and had rendered the ordinances of God of none effect, by the *commandments of men*. Though favoured with an express revelation from heaven, yet neglecting to cultivate the great duties of holiness, justice, and charity, they were ill qualified to recommend the worship of *the God of Israel* to the world. The offence received in the Gentile world, from the practice of the Jews, created universal prejudice against their religious faith and principles. During the time of our Saviour's abode on earth, they were just filling up the measure of their iniquity. Accordingly, not long after this period, Josephus, their own historian, informs us, that if the Romans had not destroyed Jerusalem, he believed that God himself, by some exemplary vengeance from heaven, would have crushed them, and destroyed their city, as he had consumed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

In these circumstances of general depravity, ignorance, and superstition, the wisest and best heathens were alarmed, and were conscious of the insufficiency of reason and philosophy to counteract the prevalence of

folly and vice. They conceived, that it was suitable to the wisdom and goodness of the Deity, to send some extraordinary person into the world, who should instruct mankind in the eternal law of righteousness, who should republish it by the authority of God, and exhibit a perfect example of virtue and piety. Such a Teacher, Legislator, and Pattern, was Jesus, who, at a season favoured not only by the progress of the Jewish religion, but likewise by the union and tranquillity of the Roman empire, taught mankind a scheme of the most salutary doctrines and precepts, enforced the observance of duty by the authority of God, and displayed in his conduct the most finished model of universal holiness.

With regard to the character of this divine Messenger, as our Teacher, it is to be observed, that he made his appearance on earth, clothed with human nature, and in his human nature revealed every thing necessary for us to know, whether with regard to *the life that now is*, or *that which is to come*. We mean not however to deny the reality of natural religion, and that it had considerable influence upon the minds of some heathen philosophers. The Being, the Attributes, and the Providence of God, are strongly impressed on all his works; nor in the darkest ages has *he left himself without witness*. But our attachments to worldly objects, and the sensual appetites and passions which they excite in us, divert our attention from him.

Yea,

Yea, so infatuated are we, that while we look upon second causes, we sometimes rest in them, and go no farther; so that the perfection of the general laws of nature, operating in a chain of causes and effects, all linked together, and subordinate to one another, veil, as it were, the Creator and the Governor of all things from our view. And, whether the Being, the Attributes, and the Providence of God, though his works afford sufficient proof of them, would have been suitably observed and acknowledged by any part of mankind, in any age, without the light of revelation, or some glimmering of it, however obscure, is a question difficult to solve. One thing is certain, that it is much easier to find out proofs for the truth, once discovered, than to make the original discovery; though at the same time, the simple truth, when it is known, is more easily retained, than the proofs of it are. But however this matter may stand, the light which once pervaded the Gentile world, is now absorbed in the sunshine of the Gospel. Christ is the *light of the world*. We have no system of natural religion meriting attention, wherein the ground-work is not taken from the Gospel; and so far as any such contains a perfect rule of duty, it must be exactly the same.

Jesus did not, indeed, like the philosophers of antiquity, harangue ingeniously, concerning the first principles of things, the nature of the soul, and the chief good; and then

then leave his subject in the same uncertainty in which he found it. Nevertheless, he has published to the world a system of religion and morality superior to all the ideas of the human mind, beyond the reach of the learned scribe, or the penetration of the profoundest sage of antiquity; and which could not therefore be derived from the knowledge and invention of man. He has dispelled the clouds of ignorance and error, enabled us to discern between good and evil, and instructed us in the whole circle of duty. Precepts moral and religious, though fair and lovely in idea, are grievous in practice to flesh and blood; and wisdom's *ways*, though they *are ways of pleasantness, and though all her paths are peace*, are esteemed by men of corrupt prejudices and passions, rough, steep, and tedious to ascend. Most justly then, has Jesus, our divine Legislator, inculcated self-denial as a duty, without which we cannot possibly give a candid hearing to the doctrines of the Gospel, or fairly essay the obedience of its commands. He has enjoined us to *strive to enter in at the strait gate*. And that the labour of the work, and the slowness of success, may not deject us and obstruct our progress, he has animated us by full assurance, that we shall enjoy to eternity, the sublime pleasures resulting from the possession of those pious and virtuous dispositions, which we cultivate here with sincerity.

The *kingdom* of Jesus is *not of this world*, and therefore he is not recorded in history,
for

for his military exploits and miraculous victories. But he wrought many more miracles of the merciful and beneficent kind, than Moses and all the Prophets did; and has uniformly supported his authority to prescribe to us, as our Legislator, not only by the evidence of miracles, and the completion of prophecy, but by the internal excellence of his laws and institutions. The main and ultimate end which the laws and institutions of Jesus are calculated to accomplish, is our gradual improvement in virtuous affections and habits, our consolation under the pressure of misfortunes and calamities, and in a future state our consummate perfection and eternal welfare.

Look back then to the ablest philosophers, and the most renowned legislators of antiquity. Peruse their discourses and reasonings concerning the rightness, the amiableness, and the obligations of virtue. Examine their different systems or codes of laws. And where shall we find the advices of the one, or the injunctions of the other, when they are justly viewed, so unexceptionable and perfect, and so highly calculated to lead mankind to virtue and happiness, as those which are contained in the Gospel of Christ? It is an encomium due only to Jesus, our divine Teacher and Legislator, that he brought down true wisdom from heaven, and published to men *the laws of God*. When our Lord had ended his sermon on the mount, *the people*
were

were astonished at his doctrine; for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

But there can be nothing more descriptive of a perfect character, than that it will bear the closest scrutiny in every light. And it is true of Jesus, not only that he spake *as never man spake*; but that he lived as never man lived. If we pass then from the heavenly lessons, the virtuous discourses, the excellent precepts, and the sound institutions of this wonderful person, to his consistent conduct and perfect example of holiness, we cannot possibly doubt, that he was more than human. In proof of this truth, look back to the greatest men that ever flourished in Greece or Rome. Recal the whole assemblage of their cardinal virtues, their prudence, their temperance, their fortitude, and their justice. Take them up in the most favourable point of view; and where shall we find such an assemblage of high virtues, as concurred in the practice and personal behaviour of Jesus? Did he not exhibit a daily, familiar, and finished example to all men, of the most general and difficult virtues? What unparalleled prudence, equity of mind, condescension, gentleness, disinterested benevolence, humility, patience, piety to his heavenly Father, submission to the divine will, and universal holiness, did he not display for our imitation throughout the whole of his life and practice? The example of Jesus is so transcendently excellent, and so far superior to every tract of the human imagination,

tion, that unless our passions over-rule our reason, and drown the voice of conscience, we cannot possibly meditate on the artless accounts given of it in the Gospel, without being charmed with the highest possible admiration of so lovely an image and representation of true virtue.

Thus then Jesus was a perfect example of universal holiness. The philosophers of antiquity, though they had many erroneous opinions, gave sometimes excellent lessons of morality, but were too often defective in practice; whereas Jesus never prejudiced the least part of truth, in his zeal for the greatest, and exemplified the most general and difficult virtues which he ever taught. The ancient legislators enforced good behaviour, by the sanctions of civil government; but he has settled it upon the immoveable basis of a religion, which enforceth righteousness by the authority of God. Finally, he has inculcated and exemplified piety, benevolence, and self-denial, in a clearer and more forcible manner, than any preceding teacher or legislator has done. His character, as the Instructor, Governor, and Pattern of his church, is directed to subdue in us the seeds of iniquity, to awe us into duty, and to train us up to good habits here, that it may be well with us hereafter. For virtue is the eternal law of God's righteous administration, *who will render to every man according to his deeds.*

3. Christ *offered up himself* a voluntary sacrifice for the expiation of sin, satisfied divine justice upon our account, *ever liveth to make intercession for us*, and will complete his mediatorial office, by returning to *judge the world in righteousness*.

The heathens observed, that much folly, vice, and misery, are diffused throughout the world. They saw, that the wisest and best of men are not exempted from their faults and imperfections, but deviate often from the paths of wisdom and virtue, both in principle and practice. They perceived, that such as are advanced in years and experience, become generally more thorough adepts in dissimulation, perfidy, and vice. And the conclusion which they drew from these facts was, that the present life is a state of punishment. The doctrine of a pre-existent state usually made an article, in the creed of such as believed, that the soul is immortal. To reconcile this doctrine with the present appearances of things, they maintained, that the soul has naturally the seeds of virtue, and the knowledge of duty ; but when it is united to body, that it drinks a cup of oblivion, which effaces the remembrance of things past. This theory, however ingenious it may be, did not lead to the root of the disease, nor resolve that great question ; Whence came evil ? Why does not the material world display a system of perfect beauty and regularity ? Why is man endowed with such limited capacities both of an intellectual

tual and moral kind? Why do his principal passions and inclinations take so often a wrong direction, and thereby contradict his virtue, and obstruct his happiness? Why is he placed in such circumstances, and connected with such objects, that ambition, avarice, and the love of pleasure, lead him so often astray? The mere exercise of unassisted reason can afford us no information, concerning the means whereby either guilt or punishment took place in the works of an all-wise Creator, whose boundless goodness must have prompted him, and whose almighty power must have enabled him to banish them out of the universe; if their exclusion had tended to the good of the whole. Agitated with these difficulties, learned men have inculcated the doctrine of two principles. They could not think of ascribing the origin of evil to God, having considered him as good, and the author of every thing fair and excellent. They chose rather to suppose, that the creation of matter was beyond the power of Deity; that it was eternal and uncreated, and contained the seeds of natural and moral evil, which even divine power could neither subdue nor prevent. This hypothesis could never maintain its ground among men, after the late improvements in philosophy and the sciences; yet it is a very ancient one, and has been almost universal among the most celebrated nations, in the eastern parts of the world.

The creation of matter, without the light of revelation, is perhaps a doctrine beyond the reach of human reason ; but, when once it is revealed, must be allowed to be agreeable to reason. It has been urged indeed, that nothing can proceed from nothing. Matter surely could not produce itself, or emerge into existence without an efficient cause. Yet whatever is capable of change or alteration, and does not include in itself a necessity of existence, must have had a beginning. Matter therefore could not but receive its existence from an adequate efficient cause, who afterwards ranged and disposed it into situations, suitable to its respective elements.

But, to return to the subject from which we have digressed a little, Scripture resolves the difficulty arising from the origin of evil in the system of the universe, or rather in our particular district of the government of God. Man was created to enjoy eternal life and happiness, upon condition of perfect obedience. And, had he continued to fulfil this condition, his body would have been preserved from death, by the special favour of God. But being left to the freedom of his own will, he violated the divine commandment given to him, for the trial of his self-government. In consequence of his transgression, he forfeited the favour of his Maker, from which alone could have been expected the continuance of life. *Sin entered*

ed into the world, and death by sin *. And our first parent and representative has conveyed to us the seeds of corruption and mortality, which he brought upon himself by his disobedience. Hence the spiritual frame of the best is impaired; and reason, designed to be the first and ruling principle in the soul, is subject to the government of appetite and passion. The harmony of the universe too, by judicial punishment, is in some measure disturbed, and the face of nature appears deformed. *The earth is cursed for man's sake, and ordained to bring forth thorns and thistles.* And farther, man is to *eat his bread in sorrow, and with the sweat of his brow. He is of few days, and is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward.* Having fallen from his primitive rectitude, he feels convincing effects of that melancholy change. But it has ever been the general sense of mankind, that the Deity would require and accept some satisfaction or reparation, to vindicate the honour and dignity of his government. Accordingly, we find that all nations, whether civilized or barbarous, however much they may have differed in other religious opinions, have agreed in their sentiments of endeavouring to appease their offended deities by sacrifices. They sometimes used to sacrifice men, from this persuasion, that the wrath of the immortal gods could be appeased by human blood only. Kings and priests, prompted by policy, could never contrive such an expedient,

* Rom. v. 12.

pedient, as is obviously calculated to alienate, rather than to gain the affections of the people; nor could they have been so uniform in all ages and countries, in any opinion whatever, from any other principle, than from common natural instinct, or supernatural revelation. Sacrifices of expiation prevailed every where among the heathen nations, as may be learned from history and tradition, and had their first rise probably from revelation. The Jews chosen of God, and separated from all the other nations, to prevent the worship of himself from being totally lost in the world, were enjoined to offer sacrifices of expiation, by a particular immediate revelation. The legal sacrifices were all so many types and figures of one great propitiatory sacrifice to be made by the blood of Christ. Under the law, a lamb was sacrificed as a sin-offering, and thus atonement was made for the sins of the people. Accordingly, John the Baptist called Christ *the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world*. And the Apostle Peter assures Christians, that they *were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot*. Without the death of Christ, the legal sacrifices would have been, though a pompous, yet an unmeaning institution. That event displays a correspondence to the symbols of the law, and renders its rites and ceremonies significant. *Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a body hast thou prepared*

*pared me: Lo I come to do thy will, O God**. The writers of the New Testament make frequent allusions to the sacrifices under the law, as presignifying this great atonement. Their allusions and strong expressions evidently ascribe an efficacy to the sufferings and death of Christ, far beyond that of every thing typical, and exhibit the true sacrifice, for the expiation of sin, and the satisfaction of divine justice, upon our account. The efficacy of the death of Christ reaches to all our offences of omission as well as commission, to our original guilt as well as our actual transgressions, and extends from the fall of man *to the end of time*. It is not intended for the benefit of the Jewish nation only, but calculated to *gather together in one, the children of God that were scattered abroad* over all the earth. And whoever peruses seriously the books of the New Testament, and denies that the efficacy of the sufferings and death of Christ is different in kind, and greater in measure and extent, than might be expected from his example, his teaching, or his administration in the government of the church, perverts the established meaning of words, and expunges out of the Scriptures the fundamental doctrine of Christianity.

The merits of the death of Christ are connected with causes which we cannot unravel, and produce consequences too extensive for us to investigate fully. Yet we have infinite reason to admire and adore the traces of divine

* Heb. x. 5. 7.

vine wisdom and goodness displayed to us, upon an humble and sober inquiry into the nature and extent of their efficacy.

To illustrate such a consideration, let us remember, that we have a strong propensity to appetite and passion, and a peculiar aversion to all the exercises of religion and virtue. The history of mankind has ever exhibited repeated scenes of folly and ignorance, shooting forth into guilt and impiety. Daunted at this view of things, the worse part of mankind draw the hasty conclusion, that nature is not to be altered, and that custom is second nature. Though they resolve and endeavour to throw off their wrong habits, yet *it happens to them according to the true proverb; The dog is turned again to his own vomit; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.*

Again, the better part of mankind have reason to complain, that *what they would, that they frequently do not; and what they would not, that they do.* *Who can understand his errors? All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.* The best have dishonoured their Maker, and broken his law. And can any but God himself inform us, what satisfaction is due to the holiness of his nature, and the justice of his administration, both for our original and actual guilt? Mere sorrow for past offences cannot surely suffice. Such an antidote seldom relieves us from their baneful effects even in this world. And what reason have we to think, that it will
operate

operate more powerfully in our behalf, in the world to come? Though we still possessed natural ability to lead lives of integrity and virtue, our penitence could make no reparation for past misbehaviour. To live soberly, righteously, and godly, for the time to come, cannot be said to be useless: God forbid! But subsequent acts of piety and virtue are insufficient of themselves to annul guilt, or to prevent the punishment annexed to vice. Reflect, that the Deity is a Being of spotless holiness, whose *eyes are purer than to behold iniquity*, and in whose *sight the heavens are not clean*. Remember, that the universal justice of the administration of God will not be complete, without punishing justice. When we speak of universal justice, we include punishing justice as a species of it. The punishment of vice therefore is necessary to the very existence of God's moral government; and cannot be remitted, without unhinging the rectitude of his administration.

Consider farther, that many men, in consequence of their profligacy and extravagance, destroy their outward estate, impair their health, and hurt their understandings. In such circumstances, future sorrow cannot remedy the attendant evils of folly and vice. Recollect, that many, in consequence of their unreasonable and wicked behaviour, incur the penalties of civil government, and bring themselves at length to an untimely and tragical end. In such cases, after-repentance procures neither reprieve nor pardon.

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Whether we reason from the nature of things, or from analogy, we have no ground to conclude, that the Deity, without a proper atonement, will forgive the guilty; and restore them to a state of favour, or bring them back to virtue and happiness. The moral perfections of the Deity, and the honour of his government, are not such as admit of granting pardon, merely on account of the efficacy of repentance. Genuine repentance will make us wise and sober for the time to come, and thereby restrain us from running into farther difficulties; but it can make no reparation for past folly and misconduct. Had the righteous Governor of the world then been inflexible and strict, so as not to accept of a mediatorial interposition, the consequences of vice must have proved for ever fatal to us. We experience, however, that vicarious punishments are the daily appointments of Providence. And, though the equity of the Romans in regulating their punishments, was very wonderful, yet they imagined it sometimes necessary, that the innocent should suffer for the faults of the guilty. Many actuated by different motives, both in the Pagan and Christian world, have courted death for others. Many too necessitated and compelled, have suffered death for the faults of others. But the sufferings of Jesus upon our account were entirely voluntary and disinterested. He willingly became *sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.* The death of Christ
presents

presents to our view a striking and awful example of the ill desert of iniquity. Without this atonement, our transgressions could not be forgiven us, and the authority of God's law maintained, at one and the same time. The attributes of God's nature, and the honour of his government, were intimately concerned, to testify to the world his perfect detestation of sin. Now, that God might shew his disapprobation of the conduct of such as violate his laws, proportionably to the demerit of their transgressions, it was indispensably requisite, that he should vindicate the honour and dignity of his government, either by the execution of the sentence on mankind, or by a substitution and a vicarious punishment equivalent to it. And could there have been a stronger warning to premonish mankind of the dangers resulting from the gratification of their lusts and appetites, and to deter them from acts of vice? Could there have been a more forcible motive, to produce in them the greatest abhorrence of depravity and wickedness? This is that great dispensation of Providence, wherein *mercy and truth have met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other*; wherein sin is punished, and yet the sinner pardoned. *Great is the mystery of godliness; even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to the saints* *. The gracious and seasonable manifestation of this mystery magnifies the mercy of God to man, and

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* 1 Tim. iii. 16.; Col. i. 26.

brings no imputation upon any of his attributes. And so far is the dignity of the person suffering from destroying the grounds of our belief, that it vindicates to the full satisfaction of every reasonable inquirer, the honour and dignity of God's laws, and justifies the equity and rectitude of his government. For the highest angels in heaven, *that excel in strength, and do the commandments* of their great Creator, are still limited in their perfections. They could not make complete satisfaction for offences committed against Almighty God, a Being possessed of all possible perfection and excellency. But Christ, who was subject to no imperfection or defect, was sufficiently qualified to pay the price of our redemption. He had the nature of man, that he might suffer; and at the same time the nature of God, that he might give immense value and efficacy to the atonement made by his sufferings. He being God and man in one person, *offered up himself* a voluntary sacrifice for the expiation of sin, and satisfied divine justice upon our account; yet could not be held in the chains of death, but having died *for our offences, was raised again for our justification*; and by his resurrection, gave sufficient proof that *all power was given unto him in heaven and in earth*. And, when he had fully instructed his Apostles for discharging their important office of teaching and baptizing all nations, *he ascended up on high, led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men*: Now, *he*
that

that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things. Henceforth then, we have such an High Priest who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens. For the priests under the law were many, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death : but this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able to save unto the uttermost, them that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true ; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us : nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place, every year with the blood of others : but now once in the end of the world, hath Christ appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. He is the propitiation for our sins : and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. And unto them that look for him, shall he appear the second time, without sin, without taking our iniquities upon him, as he did at his first coming : unto them that look for him, shall he appear the second time, without sin unto salvation. In my Father's house, says Jesus to all such, there are many mansions ; if it were not so, I would have told you : I go to prepare a place for you. And, if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also. Behold, saith the Apostle John, in the emphatical language of prophecy, he cometh in the clouds,

clouds, and every eye shall see him, even they also that pierced him *. He shall at length complete his mediatorial office, by distributing rewards to his sincere and faithful votaries, and punishments to his obstinate and implacable enemies. And, when this work is finished, then the office and kingdom of the Mediator shall cease. *Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God even the Father. For he must reign, till he hath put all his enemies under his feet. And, when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all* †.

Thus we have endeavoured to illustrate and confirm the truth of the third proposition contained in the first general head of discourse; that Christ *offered up himself* a voluntary sacrifice for the expiation of sin, satisfied divine justice upon our account, *ever liveth to make intercession for us*, and will complete his mediatorial office, by returning to *judge the world in righteousness*. But before we proceed to take under our consideration the fourth proposition, we must observe, that the object of this inquiry is not a matter of bare speculation. The circumstances concerning Christ; that he is a person of infinite perfection and dignity, the Messiah foretold by the Prophets, and was manifested *in the fulness of time*; are to be considered

* Eph. iv. 8, 9, 10.; Heb. viii. 1. vii. 23, 24, 25. ix. 24, 25, 26.; 1 John ii. 2.; Heb. ix. 28.; John xiv. 2, 3.; Rev. i. 7.

† 1 Cor. xv. 24, 25. 28.

sidered intimately, to be felt and experienced. He appeared particularly, as our Teacher, our Legislator, and Pattern. We ought therefore to comply with the design of the publication of his Gospel, to suit our temper and conduct to his laws and institutions, and to study every possible degree of conformity to his perfect model of holiness. It is farther incumbent on us, to accompany with experience and consciousness the characters belonging to Christ, as our Priest on earth, our Intercessor with the Father, and our future Judge. We ought to lay hold upon the merits of our Redeemer's obedience, and to copy *the Author and Finisher of our faith, through good report and bad report.* And, *seeing that we have a great High Priest, who is passed into the heavens, and who cannot but be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, Jesus the Son of God, we are to come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help us in time of need.* We are to *seek for glory, honour and immortality, and shall be recompenced* by our Lord when he cometh *at the resurrection of the just.* And, this is the knowledge of the gospel-scheme of salvation, so excellent in itself, and so earnestly sought after by the true disciples of Christ, that in comparison of it, they esteem every other acquisition or accomplishment, *but loss.* To unfold this knowledge more particularly, we shall proceed to state and illustrate the truth of the fourth proposition.

4. Faith and repentance are announced in the Gospel, to be absolutely requisite for promoting the progressive improvement of Christians, and accomplishing the end of our holy religion.

The present life of man is chequered with prosperity and adversity, with pleasure and pain which flow on here below, in a perpetual succession. It is not designed for a state of uninterrupted happiness, for though interspersed with enjoyments, it abounds likewise with many woes. It is not intended as the theatre of perfect wisdom and virtue, for the history of mankind gives a sad detail of the mazes and windings of their folly and wickedness. Whatever may be the character of the present age, however much it may be enlightened or refined; yet surely it has its defects, as well as former times. Few indeed, I should fain hope, *take the timbrel and harp, and say unto God, Depart from us.* But *there is no man that liveth and sinneth not* *. Have not even the better part of mankind reason to complain, that though they know and approve the right, they do it not; that though they discern and hate the wrong, yet too often they do that which is wrong? Do not spots and blemishes adhere more or less to all men, and occasionally eclipse the splendor of their wisdom and virtue? It may be, that in consequence of a good education and a happy constitution, we are not subject to the habitual influence

* 1 Kings viii. 46.

fluence of a proud, turbulent, vindictive, and malevolent temper; that we are conscious of no gigantic crime, guilty of no flagrant wickedness. It may be, that we are diligent in the business of life; and prosecute our worldly occupations, with honour to ourselves and benefit to the public. And doubtless, Christianity operates in forwarding worldly industry, and requires us to manage with prudence and attention our peculiar business, in every station and relation of life. But it has likewise a higher and nobler object in view, which is by a proper discipline here, to fit and train us up for a state of happiness hereafter. It not only enforces the practice of virtue, by the hopes of a future reward; but enjoins purity and benevolence of heart, to qualify us for the acceptance and enjoyment of that reward. *For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, neither in this world nor in the world to come; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost* *. The enemies of our religion cannot justly charge us with a mercenary temper, for regulating our behaviour by such a motive. It is the most honourable incentive to good and worthy actions, that ever could be proposed to man. Thus, in perfect consistency with good order, policy, and government, Christianity has opened to the eye of the understanding, a *strait gate*, through which all who relying upon *the grace of God in Christ Jesus*, are guided in
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* Rom. xiv. 17.

mind, heart, and life, by the *wisdom from above*, will be permitted to *enter into the kingdom of heaven*. *Know ye not, that they who run in a race, run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.* There is an unalterable difference between right and wrong; for virtue is naturally productive of happiness, and vice of misery; though accidental causes often intervene, and prevent that connection from being clearly seen. *Stand fast in the faith, therefore, quit yourselves like men, be strong.* These *Egyptians, whom you see to-day, you shall see them again no more for ever.* The event of death will put a final period to all your toils and labours *under the sun*; and then new scenes shall open to you, permanent enough, and adapted entirely to afford proper scope to virtuous exertions, and the consequences resulting from them. *The kingdom of heaven, that kingdom which cannot be shaken*, is the crown for which we are to contend, *the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*, which is to repay our labours of repentance, faith, and love. Christianity however does not mention faith and repentance as the procuring causes of our salvation, but insists on them as qualifications absolutely requisite for promoting the progressive improvement of its professors, and accomplishing its great end. We are indeed said to be *justified by faith*. But how? Why certainly, as it is instrumental to lead us to the righteousness of Christ. In Christ alone is that *fountain*, which is *opened for sin*

sin and for uncleanness. The blood of Jesus cleanseth us from all sin. We are not to suppose, that without reconciliation, we could ever escape the displeasure of our offended Creator. Now, when there was no eye to pity, nor hand to help, *God sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh. God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing unto penitent sinners their trespasses.* Not only to the house of David, but to the whole world, unto us also a Saviour is given, who is justly called, *The Prince of Peace.* What a magnificent, what a delightful scene is here exhibited to our view! *Scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man, some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love to us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.*

But to secure the benefits and blessings of that salvation, which Christ has purchased for us with his own blood, we must be restored gradually to that rectitude of heart and behaviour, which constitutes the image of God, the perfection and happiness of our being. To restore us unto such a state, he has revealed to us the nature of his spiritual kingdom, and enlightened our understandings, in the knowledge of things pertaining unto life and godliness. The Apostles likewise explained and illustrated the important doctrines of salvation, which their

great Master enforced, both in a plain and allegorical style. And since mankind are made for society, and can derive much improvement in wisdom and virtue from uniting in religious duties, Christ appointed a succession of *pastors and teachers*; *for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of his body*; and which will continue to carry down the glad tidings of the Gospel, *unto the end of the world*. He hath instituted for the benefit of his Church, two distinguishing ordinances of emphatical simplicity, and peculiarly adapted to promote the interests of religion and virtue. Baptism is the initiatory rite of his religion, which signifies God's promise to pardon our sins; and to accept us as righteous in his sight; and an engagement on our part to have faith in Christ, and *to keep ourselves unspotted from the world*. Again, the Lord's Supper is a confirming ordinance, which shews forth the death of Christ for our sakes, and expresses our union to him as our head, and our spiritual nourishment and growth in grace. And to make our own endeavours conspire with the gracious designs of heaven for the purpose of our salvation, Christ promised his blessed Spirit as his agent and representative, and has granted his kindly and auspicious influences to all his true followers, in every succeeding age of the Church.

Human reason cannot possibly comprehend, how *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*, make
 one

one Deity, or are related among themselves in the Godhead. Neither can we understand, how any being should exist from all eternity, whose past duration cannot be reached by a certain number of years. Our ideas of high numbers are generally imperfect; but we may employ them as much as we please, and add millions of years to millions of years, and yet we can never come to any fountain-head in eternity. We are sure however, that some Being must have existed from eternity, unless we put an end to all evidence, unless we set aside the relation between causes and effects, for nothing can be made without a cause. We are sure, that this Being who has existed from eternity, is the Author and Sovereign of the universe, is infinitely remote in his perfections from all finite and created beings, exists in a manner totally different from that according to which they exist, and in a manner of which they can form no idea. And, how the eternal *Three are one*; or whether the appellations, *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*, bear not a relation to the different characters which the Deity sustains in the works of creation, providence and redemption, we know not. We are not qualified to explain the manner of this union. But none of the doctrines peculiar to pure uncorrupted Christianity can be charged with absurdity, most of them appear highly rational, and the most intricate of them, as they are found in the Gospel, cannot be disproved by
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the bold assertions of those, who darken *counsel by words without knowledge*. Without making farther reflections upon this mysterious subject, and profanely arrogating to ourselves a capacity to penetrate into the substance or essence of the original self-existent Being, of which we cannot possibly form any idea ; we shall resume the illustration of the strong obligations which we lie under, to receive the Gospel as the proper rule of faith and manners.

And can such men as pretend to have considered with due attention the completion of the prophecies relative to the coming of the Messiah, the miracles wrought by the first preachers of it, and the excellent tendency of its doctrines and precepts ; can such ever dare to affirm, that Christianity is a *cunningly devised fable* ? A candid and due inquiry into these three capital sources of evidence for the truth of our holy religion, omitting even other arguments which might be advanced, would carry full conviction to the human mind. How shall men escape, *how shall we ourselves escape, if we neglect so great a salvation ?* Beware then, *lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be perverted from the simplicity that is in Christ.* Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. Jesus, conscious that the truth of his mission was supported by a complication of undeniable evidence, declared

clared that he is the Son of God, enforced the obligation of believing his religion, and cautioned men with the greatest earnestness, to avoid the judgment or condemnation of such, as reject the way of salvation, which he published to the world. *He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.* And again, *He that believeth not, doubtless from the influence of corrupt prejudice and passion, is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.* We ought therefore to exert candour and equity of mind in a careful investigation of the truth, to receive and cherish it *in a good and honest heart*, and to improve it with that *faith which worketh by love*. The Apostle James justly rejects such a faith, as is not accompanied with suitable practice *. In the New Testament, however, faith generally comprehends the whole duty of a Christian. It implies something more than a bare assent of the understanding to the objects of religion, or a speculative belief of their truth. It is the work of God's Spirit convincing us of our sin and misery, and enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and naturally leads us to receive him in all his different offices of Prophet, Priest, and King. The faith of the Gospel then rests not in theory, but operates with energy upon the heart and behaviour, amidst all the varieties
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* James ii. 14. 17. 20. 26.

and vicissitudes of life. And, as faith enlightens the understanding, and leads to the practice of true virtue, during the hazards of adversity, as well as the allurements of prosperity, so the practice of true virtue strengthens and establishes the influence of faith.

Now, though repentance cannot be esteemed the highest degree of virtuous exertion in rational creatures; yet it tends to recover us from our former deviations, and to bring us back to our original rectitude. And the offender is bound to shew a sacred regard to amendment, previously to the assurance of pardon. The constitution of human nature is such, that every new transgression and omission of duty, carry an increase of punishment to the bosom of the ignorant Indian, as well as of the enlightened Briton.

Indeed, never any one, who sincerely desired to know and do the will of God, has been neglected by him. *God is nigh unto all them, that call upon him. The secret of the Lord is with them, that fear him. In every nation, he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him* *. Nevertheless, our degree of reformation will be proportionable to our knowledge of religious and moral truths, and our belief of the obligations resulting from them. And no man can be perfect in his scheme of repentance who is not actuated in his behaviour, by the principles of Christian faith.

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* Psal. cxlv. 18

14.; Acts x. 35.

Such a repentance as the Gospel enjoins, denotes such a change of mind, as produces a like change of life and conversation, such an entire change, that, according to the language of Scripture, we may be said to *be born again*. It implies a conviction that we have done amiss, a consciousness of many frailties and imperfections. Hence follow shame and contrition for our former omissions and transgressions, a sincere confession of them to God, and an humble deprecation of the divine wrath and displeasure. Hence arises a resolution or purpose to abstain from them for the future, and to persevere, through the aid of divine grace, in our best endeavours, to improve in virtuous habits, and to perform the several duties incumbent on us.

It implies, we have observed, a conviction that we have done amiss, a consciousness of many frailties and imperfections. This conviction or consciousness supposes a previous knowledge, which is not to be acquired, but in consequence of examining ourselves. Self-examination is a duty recommended by the wisest and best heathens. "Every night, before you sleep," says one of them, "examine yourselves what good ye have done, and wherein ye have transgressed, run over these things, and if you have done evil, be troubled; if good, rejoice." Surely such an inquiry is admirably calculated, to make us reverence the dignity of our nature. *And the Gentiles which*

*which have not the law, are a law to themselves, their consciences bearing witness**. But the Gospel-revelation is particularly given to us, as the rule of duty. We must recollect not only our public behaviour, but the designs and motives of our actions, as distinctly as possible, compare them with the standard of God's word, and pass an impartial sentence. Let every man repent of *his own wickedness*. We will be much better employed in searching out our own faults, than in judging rashly concerning others. A thorough conviction of our vicious inclinations and actual transgressions, will shew us that we need a Saviour, to rescue us from our fallen condition, and to impart grace and assistance for our amendment. We must therefore pray through faith in his name, *who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption*. We must *watch and pray*, that we may be enabled more and more to die *unto sin*, and to live *unto righteousness*. We must resolve firmly, that though we *have done iniquity*, yet, through God's assistance, we will henceforth *keep the commandments*.

To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord. Bring no more vain oblations, incense is an abomination unto me, the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with, it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. If the light that is in you be darkness, how great is that darkness†? Think not

* Rom. ii. 14, 15.

† Isa. i. 11. 13.; Matt. vi. 23.

not that you can mock God, because you may impose upon the world, or deceive yourselves. He is not to be gratified with the feigned appearances of humility and devotion, but requireth *truth in the inward parts*. *Cease to do evil, learn to do well.*

Some have dispositions more adapted to acts of piety, benevolence and sobriety, than others. And where these dispositions are not thwarted by a concurrence of adverse circumstances, they will not fail to produce the fruits of wisdom and righteousness. But the Deity made no man independent of his aid, and capable of improvement without the graces of his Spirit; nor has he rendered any unfit, to do all through his strength, and to grow in grace. Vigilance and exertion are duties incumbent on every one. And, *let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.* Have not all men some wrong bias or other? Just as the twig is bent, the tree is inclined. The thoughtless and dissipated pass through life in a dream. And, though the seeds of vice should be small and languid, yet are we not apt to foster them, through the contagion of bad example, till they shoot forth, wax luxuriant, and choke the growth of the good seed? Have not pride, anger, envy, malice, and irregular passion, had occasionally dominion over us? Have not mankind, in all ages, been seduced too often by error, sloth, and vice; and prompted by the dictates of corrupt nature, and the prevalence of bad example, to wan-

der in the paths that lead to *perdition*? For *many walk*, says the Apostle to the Philippians, in the same chapter from which the text is taken; *for many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ.* The Apostle affects no stoical apathy. He expresses an amiable earnestness in cautioning the Philippians, against the example of those, who declared their enmity both in principle and practice, against the nature and terms of that *salvation*, of which *Christ has become the author unto all them that obey him.* The infatuation and misery of mankind drew tears from his eyes, as they had formerly drawn them from the eyes of his divine Master. *For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction.* From this expression, some patrons of licentious principles may infer, that there are no future punishments of wicked men. But the word * in the original language, is never understood to signify annihilation, or the loss of being. And in the New Testament, it expresses a state of incurable despair and endless misery, the *everlasting destruction and perdition of ungodly men, in that lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.* If iniquity, therefore, be in thine hand, put it far away, and let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacle.

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* ἀπώλεια,

We cannot indeed persevere in perfect obedience ; but if through surprize or the violence of temptation, we relapse into former follies and vices, we must *repent and turn unto God* ; determined through divine grace, to endeavour after new obedience. The commission of this or the other sin, will not exclude us from the compassion and forgiveness of our Maker. His mercy is not limited to any time, age or season ; but, *whenever the wicked man turneth away from the wickedness that he hath committed, and doth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive* *. Let us therefore *exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any of us be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin*. For every new transgression of which we are guilty, strengthens the impetuosity of corrupt inclinations and passions, prompts us to multiply our offences, and solicits even to perpetrate iniquities of a scarlet or crimson colour. What a world of mischief has the gratification of our lusts and appetites occasioned ? How often have pride, avarice, and sensuality, operated so as to destroy the very basis of repentance, and prompted mankind to reject the appointed means of reformation and forgiveness ? And, though the vicious infidel should at length believe and repent, yet, by persevering for a length of time in a course of wickedness, he must have exasperated his conscience, and awakened the rage of furies in his breast. To reform his heart
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* Ezek. xviii. 27.

and conduct must be as difficult and arduous a task, as to *pluck out a right eye, or to cut off a right hand*. Be admonished then to *flee from sin, as from the face of a serpent, for if thou comest too near, it will bite thee: the teeth whereof are as the teeth of a lion, slaying the souls of men*. All iniquity is as a two-edged sword, the wounds whereof cannot be healed. They that live after the flesh, shall die; they that sow to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; and they that do the works of the flesh, shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit *. Be not therefore conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of the mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God. Be diligent in managing your peculiar business; be faithful in discharging the respective duties incumbent on you, in the different stations and relations wherein you stand. And when ye taste of the comforts of life, beware, lest ye be sullied with the vices of the world; remember, that ye are here but *pilgrims and strangers*. We cannot attain to a religious state, unless we study assiduously to *lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and run with patience the race that is set before us*.

Thus we have attempted to open up the Gospel-scheme, by illustrating God's goodness towards us, and our duty towards God, under four propositions. We confined the illustration

* Rom. viii. 1.

illustration of the fourth proposition to faith and repentance, which are equivalent to the knowledge spoken of in the text. It has been our object to explain the nature of these graces, to shew that they are announced in the Gospel, as absolutely requisite for promoting the progressive improvement of Christians, and accomplishing the end of our holy religion; and to enforce the obligation of them from that view.

So ample a discussion of the first and most general source of gain mentioned in the text, anticipates in some measure the illustration of the remaining heads of discourse. *Yea doubtless*, says the Apostle, *and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; that I may know him; he then adds, and the power of his resurrection.*

II. This leads us to the *second* source of gain, which the true Christian prefers to any worldly advantage whatever; *That he may know the power of Christ's resurrection.*

The resurrection of Christ is the great hinge, on which he himself makes the evidence of his divine mission to turn. And do you think, that any impostor would choose to adopt from the beginning, such a plan as made his sufferings and death essential to his mission? Do you suppose, that any enthusiast could behave in so calm and prudent a manner, or deliver so rational a system of doctrines and precepts, as our Lord did? And can the evidence for any particular fact be
conceived

conceived to be more unquestionable, than the evidence for our Lord's resurrection? On the third day, whereon he foretold that he would rise again, his sepulchre was found to be empty. The foldiers indeed, who guarded the sepulchre, said, that *his disciples came by night, and stole away his body, whilst they were asleep*. It is highly improbable, however, that the whole guard should have been asleep, at one and the same time. But it is absolutely impossible for them to have known, that *his disciples came and stole away his body*, if, according to their own account of the matter, their senses were locked up in sleep. We learn from Scripture, that our Lord, after his resurrection, was seen upon several occasions, and among others, *by above five hundred brethren at once* *. Besides, his Apostles, the *witnesses* of his resurrection, eat and drank with him, touched and handled him, walked and conversed with him, for the space of *forty days*, and at length saw him *taken up*; and a cloud received him out of their sight †. The truth of our Lord's ascension and exaltation to the right hand of God, and consequently of his resurrection, the Apostle Peter avouches to the unbelieving Jews, in the most direct terms, and places beyond doubt, by an unanswerable argument. To convince you, says he, that Jesus is *exalted to the right hand of God, and hath received of the Father the gift of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth*

* 1 Cor. xv. 6.

† Acts x. 41. i. 3. 9.

forth this which ye now see and hear *. He enabled the Apostles to discourse on religious subjects, in languages which they had no opportunity of learning. With what labour and difficulty is the knowledge of foreign languages acquired? How much time and practice are requisite, to make us speak them with tolerable fluency? yet no sooner were illiterate men *filled with the Holy Ghost*, than they spake in living languages, and so accurately as to be understood by the natives of many different and distant countries; for they heard *them speak in their own tongues the wonderful works of God* †. This miracle mentioned by the Apostle, was doubtless sufficient for his purpose, and fully proved the truth of his assertion. But Peter adds another proof equally strong and conclusive; *Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost* ‡.

The wisdom of the Creator of all things shines conspicuous, whether we consider the nature of this gift, as qualifying the first preachers to publish the Gospel to all the world, or the suitableness of the season when it was conferred. Yea the infidel himself cannot surely have the effrontery to affirm, that there was any unnecessary expence, any waste of power, in conferring the gift of tongues, at a season when the wall of partition was broken down, and the

* Acts ii. 33.

† Acts ii. 1, 2. to the 12th verse.

‡ Acts ii. 38.

the Mosaic œconomy was to give place to a more perfect dispensation under the Messiah, designed to be universal.

After examining such a series of evidence, no candid inquirer can doubt the testimony of the Apostles, who had no temporal interest as their object, in declaring the truth of their Lord's resurrection ; but were opposed by the united efforts both of civil and ecclesiastic powers. Well then might our Saviour say ; *The men of Nineveh shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it.* But the resurrection of Christ, and his ascension into heaven, that he might be exalted to the right hand of God, carry our attention forward to his second coming. Scripture assures us, that *whilst the Apostles looked stedfastly towards heaven, as he went up, behold two men stood by them in white apparel, which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven ? This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven* *. How amazing was the condescension of the Son of God to become man ! The world shall see at length, what a great and excellent person he is, who took upon him the form of a servant. *The Father hath given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man* †. There are not wanting indeed evidences of another life, from natural reason. The soul, upon the most careful inquiry, seems to be an active, simple, uncompounded

* Acts i. 10, 11.

† John v. 26, 27.

uncompounded substance; has an inherent desire of immortality, and is capable of perpetual improvement, and progress to perfection. Upon the dissolution of the body, the mode of our existence will doubtless be changed. But surely, an immaterial substance may exist, without connection with body. We rest not the matter however upon any hypothetical reasoning, or abstruse point in philosophy, but upon a plain fact. *God hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that Man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead* *.

The resurrection of Christ gives a sanction to his declaration, that *the Father hath committed all judgment unto the Son* †; and carries in it the force of a demonstration, that he is able to execute this important office. And whatever difficulties may arise, from considering a mere spirit as responsible for the actions of the man, they are all obviously out of the question. At our Lord's second coming, we shall be the very same persons that we now are, and, conscious of our identity, shall feel ourselves to be happy or miserable in proportion as we are now righteous or wicked.

Men may indeed know the history of the Gospel, without having the experience or consciousness of that influence, which the resurrection of Christ, as an object of faith,

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* Acts xvii. 30, 31.

† John v. 22.

leading the attention of his true followers to his second coming, has upon their minds, hearts, and lives. This experience or consciousness of influence, is not to be acquired merely from considering the particular event as an object of rational inquiry, but depends upon the application which the divine Spirit makes of it to the souls of believers. It is indeed essential to our very idea of God, that he is holy, just, and good; that he loves virtue, and hates vice; that he will finally countenance the one, and testify his disapprobation of the other. If there is a God, (and that there is, all Nature cries aloud through all her works,) he must delight in virtue. That all things should come alike unto all, or, that the righteous should be as the wicked, cannot be consistent with the rectitude of God's government: *Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?* The consideration, that the world is subject to the moral government of God, affords a proof, that every man capable of distinguishing between right and wrong, and of making a proper choice, shall receive at length according to his works. But the Gospel *hath brought life and immortality clearly to light* *. Through the application of the Spirit, the resurrection of Christ raises in us a high estimation of the excellency of his power, and gives just ground for our faith and hope. Hence it is, that believers feel the greatest satisfaction in consequence of good behav-

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* 2 Tim. i. 10.

our, and have an inward assurance, that though their outward condition be inconvenient for the present, yet *all things work together for their good*. Supported by such a faith, they betray no symptoms of a weak or vulgar, of a discomposed or irregular mind; but suffer in a good cause with a calm unruffled temper, and endure the harshest treatment with singular fortitude and magnanimity. They are persuaded, that the wisdom and goodness of the Creator and Governor of all things, will be displayed in vindicating their cause hereafter; that the folly, violence, and injustice of proud, turbulent, vindictive, and malevolent spirits, can disturb their happiness in the present state only; but that reason, virtue, and religion must be regarded in the life to come. Hence, they cannot be moved to depart from the practice of virtue, by the party-heat and violence of contending fellow-citizens, nor by the presence of a threatening tyrant; but though the whole world were hurled into confusion, would maintain their integrity with an undaunted soul. Their attention is directed to a future state of existence, to *the things that are unseen and eternal*, and not to *the things that are seen and temporal*. Living under the power and influence of *the world to come*, they have the same mind in them that *was also in Christ Jesus*. They apply their hearts unto *the wisdom which is from above*; and *add to their faith* the Christian graces, transplanting them one by one into their lives.

lives. Their *conversation* or citizenship is in heaven, from whence also they look for the Saviour.

And doubtless, such minds, hearts and lives, are absolutely requisite to fit us for a state of happiness hereafter. Were it possible for the enemies of virtue to enter heaven, they could find no happiness there. The society of the blessed is by no means suited to their unhallowed passions, inclinations and pursuits. The slaves of vice must have their corresponding delights and companions. What could pure social comforts avail them? They must look with a dissatisfied eye on every object around them. Were they to travel through the unclouded regions of eternal day: Were they to *see the King in his beauty*, in the amiable harmony of his glorious perfections: Were they to join the celestial inhabitants who *rest from their labours*, and bloom in the vigour of immortal youth: They could not but prefer the solitude of the desert to such delightful mansions, and so venerable a society. They who live in any country, must conform to the manners and customs of its inhabitants. They who are citizens of the *New Jerusalem*, must all be holy, for none but the righteous can dwell there. Here then let us fix for the mark or criterion, by which every one may judge of the hope that is in him. Grace begun here, shall terminate in glory hereafter. And, he that in earnest believes the promise, will be as active in his repentance,

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as he is serious in his hope. Through the application of the Spirit, the resurrection of Christ, the ground of our faith and hope, will purify us *from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.* Scripture indeed assures us, *that scoffers shall appear in the last days, saying, Where is the promise of his coming? But one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years are as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, (as some count slackness), but is long-suffering to us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance **.

Let this much suffice to open up and unfold the second source of gain mentioned in the text, which the true Christian prefers to any worldly advantage whatever, that he may know the power of Christ's resurrection. *If Christ be not risen, then the preaching of salvation through his name is vain, and the faith of Christians is also vain. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept †.* Through the application of the Spirit, the resurrection of Christ leads the attention of his true followers to a future and eternal state, and thereby produces in them corresponding heavenly tempers, hearts and lives.

III. But in illustrating the nature of the Christian religion, distinguished for inculcating meek and suffering virtues, we cannot omit the *third* source of happiness mentioned
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* 2 Pet. iii. 3, 4, 8, 9.

† 1 Cor. xv. 14, 20.

in the text, which the true Christian prefers to any worldly advantage whatever ; That he may know *the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.*

The sufferings of Christ regard every thing cruel and ignominious undergone by him, from his birth to his grave, and imputed to us for our justification. More especially, they regard *the wrath of God*, which should have descended on us, and was *poured* forth on him as our expiatory sacrifice. We may give greater latitude, however, to the idea expressed by *Christ's sufferings*. The language of Scripture seems to authorize a more general signification. The phrase expresses not only such personal sufferings as he endured on earth ; but refers often to the sufferings undergone by *his body, the Church, of which he is the Head*. Hence the Apostle to the Colossians speaks ; *Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh, for his body's sake, which is the Church**. We understand the text chiefly in this last sense, but do not exclude either of the two former meanings ; because, doubtless true Christians have fellowship or communion in the blessings of that salvation purchased for them, by their Lord's personal sufferings and death. And they *know the fellowship of Christ's sufferings*, not with a bare speculative knowledge and belief of their share or communion in that redemption, which Christ has bought for them

* Col. ii. 24.

them by his personal sufferings. They request *God the Father of glory*, to give them *the spirit of wisdom*, and to enlighten *the eyes of their understanding*; and have such a practical knowledge of fellowship or communion in Christ's sufferings, that they are able to give a reason of the hope that is in them. They continue, through divine aid, to use the proper means for promoting their growth in grace, till they all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*. Blessed are ye, says Jesus, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake: Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven. These things, says he to his disciples upon another occasion, have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world. Supported by such assurances, and animated by divine grace, the Apostles and other Martyrs gloried even in tribulation. They were, as Paul expresseth it, sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; troubled on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; as having nothing, yet possessing all things. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil doer, or as a busy body in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on that behalf†. Consider how
Moses,

* Eph. iv. 13.

† 2 Cor. vi. 10. ; iv. 8. ; 1 Pet. iv. 15, 16.

Moses, when he came to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. Compare the number of years during which this venerable Prophet suffered *affliction*, with the great number of years which have past since. His troubles on earth were of short duration, in comparison of the time during which he has enjoyed *the recompence of reward*, and in comparison of an eternity of happiness. And *our light affliction*, says the Apostle, *which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding, and an eternal weight of glory* *. Jesus himself, *the great Captain of our salvation*, underwent the most dreadful sufferings, for this reason among others, to leave us *an example that we should follow his steps*; and *rejoice inasmuch as we are partakers of his sufferings, that when his glory shall be revealed, we may be glad with exceeding joy* †.

And can there be a stronger bond of union, than that which arises from a practical knowledge of *fellowship* or communion, in our Lord's *sufferings*? There is doubtless a principle of sympathy in human nature, that leads us to have *fellowship* with others, in every accident through life, to which they are obnoxious. When we attend to the origin and progress of our feelings, we find that we are framed in such a manner, as to enter into the concerns of others, *to rejoice with them that do rejoice, and to weep with them that*

* 2 Cor. iv. 17.

† 1 Pet. ii. 21. ; iv. 13.

that weep *. Such is the original constitution of mankind. And doubtless, to shew that we have a practical knowledge of *fellowship* or communion with another in adversity, is a much surer criterion of friendship, than to declare attachment to him in his prosperity. And, where the case is uncommonly piteous, the mind that is not perverted and callous to humane sensations, is made captive at once, and has no power to make resistance. Should something adverse then befall another for whom we have sincere attachment, Would we not at once enter into his situation and feelings? Would we not participate with sensible pleasure in his adversity, and rejoice that we had an opportunity of testifying an experimental knowledge of *fellowship* or communion in his sufferings?

And were we to suppose, that we derive no benefit through the sufferings of Jesus: Were we to consider him only as a mere man, advanced in consequence of his extraordinary virtue to the right hand of God, and crowned with glory and honour: Were we to think maturely of his humility, patience, forgiveness, and benevolence; his noble contempt of power and riches, and of that empty applause which the folly of one part of mankind bestows upon the wickedness of another: Were we to recollect with due attention his undaunted resolution in adhering

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to

* The words in the original language are; *χαίρειν μετὰ χαίρόντων, καὶ κλαίειν μετὰ κλαιόντων*; and some such word as *δὴ* is understood.

to the practice of universal goodness, and his unshaken zeal in maintaining the truth : Could we help feeling in the sufferings appointed for one of so high a character ? Might we not rejoice justly, upon having an experimental knowledge of *fellowship* or communion in the afflictions and miseries undergone by him, who in the lowest view, was evidently more excellent than the sons of men ? Remember, however, all ye friends of religion and virtue, that Jesus the Son of God has not only shown himself *the chief among ten thousand*, and transcendently excellent ; but besides, has laid you under obligations special and infinite, which you can never possibly discharge. Remember, that he has made satisfaction for your sins, paid the price of your redemption, and accomplished your reconciliation with God. Reflect, that he has wrought this important work, by veiling his divinity with human nature ; by undergoing *the wrath of God*, which should have descended on guilty men ; by submitting to the insults and cruelty of men, for whose everlasting advantage his sufferings were calculated. Attend to these considerations, and can you forbear to rejoice in an experimental knowledge of *fellowship* or communion in your Lord's *sufferings* ?

The cruel and ignominious death of the cross which Jesus suffered, was usually inflicted on none, but the lowest and vilest of malefactors. The criminal was commonly first scourged, and then nailed to the accursed

fed tree. Pilate having confirmed the sentence passed against him by the chief priests and elders, in conformity to this custom, ordered him to be *scourged*, and then *delivered him up to be crucified*. Thus Jesus took our iniquities upon him. He suffered upon the *cross* for all, and all are said to be *crucified with him*. He, as the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews informs us, *tasted death for every man*. And it is an inference drawn by the Apostle ; *that if one died for all, then were all dead*. And the way of attaining unto the benefits purchased by the death of Christ, as we learn from the last clause of the text, is by *being made conformable unto his death*. Doubtless, Saint Paul means such conformity to the death of Jesus, as required the Apostles and first Christians, to vindicate the truth of the Gospel, at the expence of their lives. Accordingly, this faithful champion of the Cross, as well as most of his fellow-labourers, suffered death for this very purpose. We find the good Apostle rejoicing in such a prospect, with triumphant hope, a little before he was beheaded, by the order of the Emperor Nero. *I am now, says he, ready to be offered up, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me in that day*. And surely, the greater our conformity to Christ is, the more secure is our hope here, and the more perfect shall be our happiness

happiness hereafter. *If we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: If we suffer, we shall also reign with him.*

We are not indeed called upon, in the present times, to submit unto scourging, imprisonment, and death, in behalf of our religion; and, therefore, the idea of conformity to the death of Christ, which corresponds with our situation, falls short of, and is different from the idea just now given. But with respect to conformity to the *death* of Christ, we are said to be *buried* with him by *baptism* into his death, when through baptism we *put off the old man, which is corrupt according to deceitful lusts; that we may put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness* *.

It may be asked now; why should not the belief of Christianity produce the same steady course of piety, devotion, charity, temperance, patience, and virtue, for which its primitive converts were eminently distinguished? The true answer to such a question is; that it is not altogether believed, perhaps too often, that it is almost entirely disbelieved. *They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick; for Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance* †. See then, that ye use your best endeavours, to forward the merciful purpose, for which the Gospel was published to the world. See, that ye *walk not in the vanity of your minds, having your understandings darkened, and alienated from God.*

* Col. ii. 12.; Eph. iv. 22, 24.

† Luke v. 31, 32.

God. Let not your souls cleave to dust, as if you were strangers to the covenant of promise. Let not sensual appetite be the ruling principle of your conduct, as if you were the servants of sin. But mortify your corrupt inclinations, and restrain the gratification of them, that ye may be alive unto God through Christ Jesus your Lord.

When we enter upon a religious course, right behaviour is accompanied with great inward struggles. But consider the intolerable drudgery of folly and vice. How servile is the condition of such as live without God in the world ! Reflect on the other hand, that the practice of virtue becomes gradually more easy, yea, at length, delightful and pleasant ; and invites us to persevere, amidst all surrounding difficulties. By this argument, the inspired philosopher exhorts his pupil to the study of heavenly wisdom. *When wisdom, says he, entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul, discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee : To deliver thee from the way of the evil man, from the man that speaketh froward things : To deliver thee from the strange woman, even from the stranger that flattereth with her words*.* One half of such as fall into wrong habits, do so from mere thoughtlessness and dissipation. The other half go along with them, partly from the same cause, and partly from easiness of temper.

How difficult and arduous must it appear
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* Prov. ii. 10, 11, 12. 16.

to subdue bad habits, and to purify the heart? But balance this difficulty, with the advantages resulting from avoiding every thing wrong, and learning *to do well*. Self-denial deprives vicious affections of that strength, which they would acquire from sinful gratifications. Though abstinence from vice, and a right outward behaviour, cannot take away vicious affections; yet if we persevere in sincere endeavours, to accomplish this end, they will prove a good preparative for the grace needed to extirpate them, and renew the heart. Perhaps, indeed, after our utmost efforts, the imaginations of our hearts may be inclined too much unto evil. But what ground of consolation is it to think, that the most valuable productions in nature are not always most forward in their growth, nor do they soonest arrive at perfection? And may not a like progress take place in the kingdom of grace? However slow or difficult our advances in religion may be, we ought not to be discouraged. It is requisite, that we adhere with bravery and resolution, unto *a patient continuance in well-doing*. It cannot be denied, however, that a Christian may be overpowered, by the irregularity of imagination, and the disorder of passion; and, though he must be free from any perverseness, or habit of evil, yet his actions may occasionally contradict his principles. But we may as well say, that we are alive to this world, and can do the business of life, after our death and interment; as

as that we are Christians, when we are dead in the sense of the Gospel, by continuing to *live in sin*. *They that are Christ's*, or that are alive to him, *have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts*. They have laid aside *all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies*; and are even said to *have put on Christ*, from the similitude of will and affections, that exists between Christ and his members *. *Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal bodies, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof: Neither yield ye your members, as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin*. But *put on (as the elect of God holy and beloved) bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; and above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness*. To no purpose shall we call Jesus Lord, unless we do the things, which he commands us. To no purpose, shall we imagine, that our *peace is made* with heaven, *through the blood of his cross*, unless on earth we follow *peace with all men*, and that universal holiness, *without which no man shall see the Lord*.

And this, we imagine, to be a just account of the third source of happiness mentioned in the text, which the true Christian prefers to any worldly advantage whatever; That he may know *the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, being made conformable unto his death*.

It may be proper however to observe, that, though it is the duty of every Christian, to *bear witness unto the truth*, whatever may be the event; yet he ought not to expose

* Gal. iii. 27.

pose himself wantonly to sufferings ; but to avoid with circumspection, unnecessary afflictions, miseries, and death.

When *the Pharisees held a council against Jesus, how they might destroy him* ; the sacred historian informs us, that *he withdrew himself from them* *. It was only *when his hour was come*, that he fell an easy victim into their hands. And, though he was eminent for his meek and suffering virtues ; yet he has exemplified a noble scorn, against the meanness of such as have one thing ready upon their tongue, and another thing shut up in their heart ; and occasionally reprehended with prudence and resolution, the wicked hypocritical behaviour of factious, licentious, and self-interested men. *The scribes and the Pharisees, says our Lord, sit in Moses seat. All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do ; but do not ye after their works : for they say and do not* †.

And thus we have finished the illustration of the three sources of gain, in comparison of which, the worthy Apostle esteemed all other reliances, privileges, and attainments, *but loss* ; and which every true Christian prefers to any worldly advantage whatever.

But to give a complete view of Gospel-morality, we shall now make such remarks as shew, that patriotism and friendship are perfectly consistent with the spirit and genius of our holy religion. As to patriotism, it
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* Matt. xii. 14, 15.

† Matt. xxiii. 2, 3

is to be observed, that the great Author of the Christian institution never encouraged the display of such a hardy one, as prevailed long ago at Sparta, and divested its inhabitants of natural affection. Neither has he authorised that kind of patriotism, which has instigated powerful states, cloaked under the profession of his religion, to prosecute such public measures as tend to subvert the laws of justice, and to destroy the distinctions between right and wrong. He has inculcated such a patriotism only, as leads us to make no undue preferences; and has taught us to account mankind, and act towards them, according to the different relations wherein they stand. He requires us to esteem parents and kindred; our own family, our acquaintances, and countrymen; and to perform good offices towards them. He exemplified due submission to civil government, and enjoined his followers to observe a similar conduct. *Render to Cæsar*, says he, *the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's* *. And, though his last sufferings were just at hand, whereby he was to become a propitiation for the sins of the whole world, yet foreseeing the dreadful calamities, which should befall that province of the empire wherein he was born, in consequence of rejecting him as the Messiah, from the *evil heart of unbelief*, with what divine compassion does he exclaim, for the fate of unhappy Jerusalem! O *Jerusalem, Jerusalem,*

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* Matt. xxii. 21.

*Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not * !*

The Apostle Paul, in the spirit of his divine Master, enjoins the subjects of every government, to be peaceable and quiet ; to attend carefully to the duties of their several stations ; and to obey the equitable laws of the reigning powers, which providence has placed over them, as the guardians of their civil and religious rights, and the protectors of their national property and possessions. *Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers ; for there is no power but of God : the powers that be, are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God : for rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil †.*

Again, as to friendship, it merits attention, that, though the Gospel authorises us to exercise universal benevolence, and to perform good offices to all men, yet it requires us to hate their vices, with a perfect detestation, and to shun the company of the immoral, as much as possible ; for *evil communications corrupt good manners ‡*. We may reasonably suppose indeed, that no man whatever is completely wicked. We cannot help pitying the condemned criminal ; though we must allow that his pardon is inconsistent

* Matt. xxiii. 37. ; Luke xiii. 34.

† Rom. xiii. 1, 2, 3. ‡ 1 Cor. xv. 33.

consistent with the welfare of society. But it is impossible for a man of virtue, to cherish sentiments of complacency to any other, whose good qualities do not counterbalance his bad. Jesus, the Friend of mankind and virtue, gave no quarter to such coalitions, as arise in the world, from confederacies in vice, leagues of pleasure, or undue regards to self-interest. He has exemplified a high approbation and love of moral excellence, a singular regard to the amiable display of virtuous sentiments, affections, and manners; and advises his true followers, to cultivate intimate society with such alone, as attend to *the weightier matters of the law, mercy, judgment, and faith*. When our friendship arises from the union of piety, devotion, temperance, sobriety, justice, charity, generosity, and beneficence, assembled together in the same character, it cannot be too strong. It stands upon a sure basis, and is inconsistent with that envy and malice, which the selfish cherish in their hearts, against such as thwart their party-measures. *If any man will come after me, says our Lord, let him deny himself**. He must mortify every unreasonable selfish desire; and feel charity to all mankind, particularly a high esteem and approbation of those, whose manners are marked with true virtue and goodness. And, however strong our attachments to such may be, yet they are equal and right, not appropriating our kind affections, and exertions, which are to
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* Matt. xvi. 24.

be extended in different degrees to all mankind. The Gospel indeed requires us to exercise the principle of resentment, for the purpose of resisting others, in wicked enterprises, and correcting an excessive tenderness of nature, however amiable it may be, that our *good may not be evil spoken of*. Our obligation to benevolence, however, is not destroyed by injury, but extends even to enemies, to the unkind and unthankful. *If ye love them which love you, what thanks have ye? for sinners also love those that love them* *.

Before we conclude the subject, we shall give a short and general illustration of the happy consequences resulting from the moral or practical tendency of the Gospel.

When we consider the state of the world, and the nature of man, we shall find, that a certain degree of virtuous exertions is preferable, upon every supposition, to immoral conduct or behaviour. Even the man, who believes that there is no God, and who is blind to the beauty of true virtue, will be prompted occasionally, at least, to practise the duties of sobriety, contentment, justice, and humanity, from views of private interest and conveniency. And, as man cannot subsist, without forming connections in society, so the very existence of society depends upon order and regularity, upon the performance of just and kind offices to one another. But setting aside a future existence, the morality expected from us, could
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* Luke vi. 32.

not extend beyond the circle of agreeable and profitable virtues. We would want sufficient encouragement, to endure trials for righteousness sake ; we would want the hope of rewards, to make us chuse rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. " O happy day when I shall escape
 " from this crowd, this heap of pollution ;
 " and be admitted to the divine assembly
 " of exalted spirits !" Did a heathen speak in so elevated a manner of that day, when he expected to meet with the souls of famous heroes and philosophers ! And ought not the Christian to exult with joy, at the sure prospect of that blessed day, when he shall meet with the patriarchs, and the prophets, and the members of *the general assembly of the church of the first born, and with Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and with God the Judge of all !* How groundless then are these prejudices, which some are too apt to take up against religion, as if it exhibited to view a gloomy scheme of things, grievous to the feelings of humanity, and inconsistent with the true enjoyment of life ! Such sentiments are apt to prevail, in the hours of mirth and festivity, when the passions are warm and impetuous. But is this the just estimate of things ? The pleasures of sense soon evaporate, like *the crackling of thorns under a pot*. The most opulent and honourable station, carries along with it many temptations and snares, hid from
 public

public view. And, however ardent our thirst for riches and honours may be, true happiness consisteth not in property and possessions, nor in the distinctions of life. But the consciousness of integrity, produces a tranquillity of mind, to which the vicious, however successful, are totally strangers. How noble and magnanimous is the spirit of forgiveness! How commendable and beneficial are piety, benevolence, temperance, and moderation! How amiable and excellent are patience and perseverance in well-doing! And, though it is not to be desired, that the contemplation of the decency and dignity of true virtue, and the prospect of its temporal and eternal rewards, should raise in us such perceptions of animal fervour, such feelings and meltings of the heart as pass away like the *morning cloud and the early dew*; yet they ought never to terminate in the coldness of philosophy. Christianity places *godliness* in the most engaging light, and assures us that it is *profitable unto all things*, to animate us to the steady love and practice of it. A regard to religion and virtue, has a natural tendency to bring along with it, many temporal advantages, by the fixed laws of a wise and righteous Governor. Had goodness however been always immediately and amply rewarded, this life could not be a state of trial and education, to prepare us for another. Every present dispensation of providence, points forward to a future existence, wherein seeming irregularities shall be finally

finally adjusted. And, whenever the near approach of futurity dissolves the spell of outward objects; whenever the view of passing *through the valley of the shadow of death*, excites our hopes and alarms our fears, then virtue shall be found universally, to be the only substantial good. Though all things around us be wrapped up in clouds and thick darkness, yet they who have endeavoured sincerely to do their duty, enjoy peace with God, peace of conscience, that peace which passeth all understanding. Unappalled by the appearance *of the king of terrors*, they fear no evil, but commit their cause with secure and triumphant hope, to *him that judgeth righteously*. The souls of believers at death are made perfect in holiness, and immediately pass into glory. And at the resurrection, their souls improved in every thing good and great, shall be united to their bodies, exempted from all imperfection, disease, and corruption. Restored again to the whole man, they shall be openly acknowledged and acquitted by a visible Judge, smiling on them, with the gracious kindness of his mild and stately aspect. The joys reserved for the righteous, far surpass every thing, which we can either describe or conceive. And dreadful misery shall be the portion of the wicked. The Judge frowning upon them, with a just disdain, shall pronounce a sentence, at the thought of which, the most abandoned may shudder and recoil. Ought not these considerations to reconcile

concile us unto every difficulty, that may obstruct the performance of duty? Ought they not to make us to *deny* ourselves, to *take up our cross and follow* Christ, and to labour in doing the whole *will of God*? It cannot suffice, that a Christian is not debauched and profligate in his conversation; that he is a man of honour and justice; that he scorns to do any base or infamous action; and that he does to others, as he *would* that they *should do* to himself. He must *pray* likewise to his *Father, who seeth in secret*. And, when he attends public worship, he is not actuated, so much by a deference to the opinions of his countrymen, or from the principle of curiosity, as from an unfeigned desire of promoting the ends of true devotion. He has his heart alive to the means whereby communion between God and man is maintained. The connection betwixt the practice of true virtue, and a regard to God himself, is inseparable. *Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as unto the Lord, and not unto men* *. We are indeed naturally backward to that which is good, and prone to that which is evil. But is not *the grace of God in Christ Jesus sufficient* for us? And, what should then hinder from working out our *salvation*, when God is ready and able, to work in us *both to will and to do*? Let us *take heed* then, that we keep *the word* of his *patience*, and he will *also keep us from the hour of temptation*. *To him that overcometh,* says

* Col. iii. 23.

says Jesus, *will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God* *. If therefore we sustain the loss of worldly advantages in consequence of our Christian profession, the Gospel-revelation promises to us a compensation, not only great and excellent, but stable and secure. The prospect of this compensation, is the surest antidote against vicious habits and their consequent evils; the best resource under the misfortunes and calamities of life; and the firmest basis, on which a dependent creature can rest, during the storm that beats upon him. While others then say, *Who will shew us any good?* let every well-disposed person say with the Psalmist; *I intreated thy favour with my whole heart; Lord lift upon me the light of thy countenance; create a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me.* While others are concerned about many things; while the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and they become unfruitful; let them who have leisure and inclination to read this discourse, be persuaded to concern themselves about the *one thing needful*, the better part which shall not be taken from them.

* Rev. ii. 7.

1847
The first of the year
was a very dry one
and the crops were
very poor. The
winter was very
cold and the
spring was very
wet. The summer
was very hot and
the autumn was
very dry. The
year was a very
poor one for
the crops.